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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR JO
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON RIYADH BOMBINGS, PEACE
PROCESS

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers today, May 15, focuses on the aftermath of the suicide attacks in Riyadh. Another lead story today focuses on Israeli attacks killing 5 Palestinians and demolishing over 25 Palestinian homes. On Iraq-related issues, only Al-Rai Arabic and the Jordan Times English dailies carried lead stories about the discovery of mass graves with thousands of bodies in Iraq.

-- Coverage of Secretary Powell's visit to Jordan in yesterday's papers, May 14, was overshadowed by reports of the bombings in Riyadh. The signing of the \$700 million cash transfer between the Secretary and Foreign Minister Muasher in Amman received good coverage.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The terrorism debate"

Center-left, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (05/15) editorializes: "Terrorism is obviously nurtured by frustration and desperation. It takes political, economic and cultural work to eradicate it. The 'cultural cure' is up to all of us, and it mainly hinges on countering the notion that violence can be used for the achievement of political goals. It is also necessary to foster a healthy dialogue on Islam and its values, with a view to emphasize and bring to everyone's attention - Muslims and others - that Islam is first and foremost about the sanctity of life. Politically, as it has been repeated almost ad nauseam, and as it should be increasingly obvious, the core problem of the Middle East - the Palestinian question - needs to be adequately addressed. The United States went after the Taliban and Osama Ben Laden in Afghanistan. But terrorism has not stopped. The United States went after Saddam Hussein in Iraq. But terrorism has not stopped. Before another war is started, perhaps it would be worth to see to a fair and final solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict."

-- "Operations that serve the continued foreign presence?"

Daily columnist Sultan Hattab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, Arabic daily Al-Rai (05/15): "These operations [Riyadh bombings] might be, just as others were in the past, a tool for the foreigner to seal his control, impose his conditions, and effect the change that he wants. What was attacked in reality involved Arab security, Arab interests and the Arab image, before targeting a group of Americans. The requirements of achieving a peaceful political settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have Israel cornered, and its rejection of the roadmap has been exposed. The Riyadh terrorist operations happened to rescue Israeli and get it out of the dilemma by turning the spotlights away from it and relieving it from the demands of international pressures. Now, there is new rising terrorism that must be dealt with and fought off, because it is a terrorism that hurts Americans.. Those who perpetrated the bombings in Riyadh have saved the enemies of the Arab cause, justified the foreign intervention and the U.S. war against the region."

-- "Saudi Arabia in the storm"

Daily columnist Jamil Nimri writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Dustour (05/15): "Describing the bombings in Saudi Arabia as

a terrorist action is not enough, because they are utter lunacy.. Political terrorism as a means to an end is known throughout the history of political movements. Yet, mass suicides in a residential complex go beyond the phenomenon of political terrorism. It is a mental disorder."

-- "Killing off the roadmap"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (05/15) editorializes: "By stating clearly and frankly that no one exercised any pressure on his government to accept the roadmap, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon divulges a very important part of the Collin Powel's talks in Israel and puts an end to the illusion that some members of the U.S. administration promoted regarding Washington's seriousness and readiness to exercise pressure on the Palestinian and Israeli parties to accept and to implement the roadmap. Clearly, American pressures have one side and one direction and they have targeted the Palestinian party and held it responsible for the criminal actions of the victimizer, while the forces of aggression and occupation continued to receive understanding and sympathy.. The situation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is nearing a state of endless vicious circle. Israel continues its war of siege and extermination for the third year running.. More seriously, the United States, the superpower and the only country capable of twisting the Hebrew State's arm, refuses to do that, rather intentionally directs its pressures towards the Palestinians and the Arab. The situation being what it is, Arab and international efforts must be directed towards Washington, which has pledged support for the peace process, but in reality is working to impede this process with its blind bias in favor of the Hebrew State."

-- "Riyadh bombings and the formula of terrorism and bias"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (05/15): "There are two major facts that must be said before writing about the bombings in Riyadh. The first fact is that any act of violence that targets civilians of any nationality is a terrorist act that is rejected and condemned. The second fact is that the sole reason for these terrorist operations and actions in general is the U.S. policy in the Arab world. Thus we write that we condemn terrorist actions, that we condemn the killing of innocent civilians, and that we denounce American policies, and we are not ashamed to say that. It is hard to shed tears at the American victims . because we have seen thousands of civilians die in Iraq by American weapons and have not seen the Americans overly sensitive or emotional. Washington must understand that its aggressive policies, its occupation of Iraq, its complete bias in favor of Israel's crimes, its desire to control the Arab world will not be welcomed with the applause and ululations of the millions of people. In fact there are those who are so angry and furious with the American policies that they are willing to confront it with violence." GNEHM